Dance Arts
Now!
The official Junior/Secondary NHSDA Newsletter
Spring Edition 2023
Greetings, NHSDA Members!
Spring bursts into a new year, creating dance with a fresh view, teaching little chicks how to hop, & costuming with flowers ~ all with love.

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  Dance as Solace, Freedom, & Therapy
Dance is euphoria I will never abandon ~
a high where I will not come down.
I could have a horrible day,
but as soon as I set foot on the dance floor, all the tension
flows right out of my body.
I become a better version of myself when I dance.

I love the impact dance has on others.
I want to inspire those who feel they
will never make it because they are not skinny enough or
they cannot kick their leg behind their head, or
when any doubt arises.
I want to show them that with enough dedication,
we can overcome anything.

People always tell me I was a crazy kid because, from a youthful age,
I knew in my heart what I wanted to do in life. Now more than ever,
I am on this earth to entertain.

One of my earliest memories is sitting in the living room with my mom,
watching The Rockettes on TV. I could not help but
jump right up and start kicking my leg around with them! I remember
that overwhelming joy, and from then on, my goal was to be a professional dancer.

I am not just a dancer; I want to do it all!
My career aspirations are to be a leading lady on Broadway. So clearly, I
picture this. I will not stop pushing myself until I
reach that goal. After high school, I plan to major in Musical Theater
in college and audition in the city.

I have no doubt my career will be in the arts, whether it be
performing eight shows a week on Broadway,
or teaching in the studio, or even choreographing for a Broadway show.
I will be happy to continue to invest my time and energy into
what I love most in this world ~ The Magnificent Arts.
Dance has impacted my life in and out of the studio, allowing me to grow past my physical limitations. My name, Miniaris, is a unique part of my identity, which my father created when he was 15, in case he had a daughter ~ as he wanted the name to be remarkable. However, many people struggle to pronounce it, so I go by Mini. Likewise, I had always felt small. Around age 11, when most kids grow, we discovered I had Growth Hormone Deficiency. As a treatment, I had therapeutic injections once a day around the same time I started dancing. Most girls my age had been dancing since they were 2, so when I joined the studio, I found myself in a class for ages 8-9. Not only was this awkward, but I was too short to fit in with the girls my age. Initially, I struggled, feeling I was not good enough, especially for competitions. In addition, my pain from the injections and sudden growth spurts made it difficult for me to progress. Despite these obstacles, I put my best foot forward to continue practicing. I came to terms with my physicality and learned to focus on myself. I then caught up quickly to my peers and joined the competition team.

My journey has taught me skills of responsibility, collaboration, and drive to succeed ~ improving my mindset and applying optimism to my life. Dance has made me grow strong, even if I cannot thrive physically. I accept my height, applying it to my advantage to be quick and to perform contorted movements. With my skills, I encourage others to stick with their passions and take the first step toward what they want to be at any age or physicality.

Dance has helped me develop a passion for human anatomy and how body parts and muscles affect movement, sparking a curiosity to research further. When I attended an Anatomy and Physiology class, I realized how connected the two subjects are. I now improve my dancing by studying the body, and I will work outside dance to help others with techniques similar to what I learned in dance.

Dancing is essential, and I am working to combine medical with art aspects of Physical Therapy for a fulfilling career where I can be happy and help others. I will become a physical therapist and work closely with professional dance companies, sharing my experience in which dancers can move creatively beyond physical limitations. To accomplish this goal, I volunteer at a clinic, assisting a Physical Therapist while learning how to deal with patients. I apply my training to let them know we can enjoy dancing together even after rehabilitation.

I know how difficult life was for me, often feeling discouraged as if getting nowhere. Still, I succeeded. And so, by lending a helping hand and spreading positivity, I hope to show how to trust ourselves ~ knowing our dreams will turn out positively.
Dance Aides in the Healing Process

By: Brya Simpson (Graduate)
North Atlanta High School

Dance has aided in my life’s obstacles and triumphs, transfiguring my vision to share its healing power within the community.

Growing up in a studio was a beautiful yet stressful experience. Dance is my first passion, a love that never fails me; however, developing into an advanced dancer was difficult. I always admired my teachers and expressed appreciation for their knowledge and for making class enjoyable. Despite this, there was a time when my dreams instantly turned into a nightmare.

Certain studio teachers meant to be nurturing soon became controlling and mentally damaging. My endearment for the art gradually became miserable. There was a time when I never wanted to dance again. With my confidence thus broken, I never felt good enough.

Why had I stayed? Because I did not want to let my teammates down by quitting. Then the realization set in; I left that studio when the season finished.

I continued to dance in my school's company and the marching band, which helped me in many ways. I received positive reinforcement from my teacher and coach rather than negativity, boosting my confidence back to where it once was. I realized dance was not what I hated, but the constant feeling of being torn down and exhausted. The coach was intense and critiqued honestly but positively ~ How I loved this method. I was back!
Because of my dedication, teamwork, and ultimate improvement, a contemporary company invited me as a pre-professional. I then understood dance is far more than a technique; it is a powerful, sensitive way to show compassion and express our inner feelings intellectually.

We must be supportive in happiness and despair as we remember each other. I began my mission of mental health awareness when I created a concept video for my classmate who committed suicide. The anniversary of his death approaching, then the pandemic, made my feelings more difficult to express. In his honor, I rented a studio to teach my classmates contemporary dance with dialogue. This process helped us cope with his passing, and his parents reached out in appreciation. I did not realize how much he touched so many hearts until the responses to my school newspaper's interview about my dance relayed compassion.

My experiences inspire me to become an entrepreneur and own dance schools upon positivity, fun, and education. And this mission expands into the health field while supporting those who share my passion.

I will give back to my community by creating a non-profit organization for aspiring dancers with limited incomes to participate in technique and related classes. My business will award college scholarships, stressing the importance of education and community support through the power of the arts.

Creating art is what I love, touching people in ways I could not imagine. The world can make us bitter and numb, and art is an excellent way to express how we feel and promote a positive perspective on difficult situations. Whether helping someone financially or emotionally, my artistic gifts will move with this purpose.
I have discovered the great art form, *Tap Dancing*, which allows me, naturally, to become a musician with my feet. More than ever, art has become my escape haven, with staccato rhythms bringing joy, peace, and a constant element when life becomes uncertain or chaotic.

Yet, a significant concern is a false myth that "tap dancers only tap," and here I set out to debunk that misconception!

After my first studio closed when I was eleven, I soon attended another. To my surprise, this place did not offer any tap classes. Not to be deterred, I demonstrated my extensive training, which convinced the director to establish a new program.

Yes, tap is my favorite genre, but I am versed in many techniques. Studying has helped me develop a strong work ethic with discipline from a young age. My teachers guided me to put my feelings into movements for audiences to understand what I could not express verbally. This training has led to working with world-renowned tap dancers such as Jason Samuel Smith, Justin Myles from "Tap Dogs" and Anthony Morigerato.

My influence continues at my present studio home. The director, thrilled about my progress and passion for this all-American style, commented, "Now the students see tap dancing is alive, well, and cool." And I substituted all levels for the first teacher who taught me. From group numbers to a girl's first-ever solo, I now contribute to all aspects of technique and choreography.

My dreams continue to expand performing as an ambassador, a "Tap Titan," with this glorious art form.
Mark Your Calendars!

- Dance-A-Difference Week, March 5th ~ 11th
- Thank-A-Dance Teacher Day, May 5th
- Senior Slide Show & NHSDA Recognition Day June 8th
Making A Difference
All Year Round!

The staff and teams at Dance Art Dance Studio in Missouri develop even the youngest dancers' creativity, helping them achieve greater self-esteem while maintaining a healthy lifestyle and making friends. The students enjoy sharing their love of dance with the community during Make-A-Difference Week and throughout the year! Among their contributions:

- Participating in Storytimes & Book Drives,
- Helping Girl Scouts earn badges,
- Collecting needed items for our local Food Bank,
- Making crowns at the Eureka Days Kids Korner

Some students even perform with the professional St. Louis Ballet Company. And the school members thank first responders, veterans, and their families for their service with special tuition rates. We salute you, Dance Art Dance Studio, for making hearts happy!
Pikes Peak Love!

“If I were to make a wish for everyone, it would be to have a career where we open a new box of crayons daily, a place where the fairies are regular visitors, and angels are standing in first position right in front of us.”

~ Proclaims Zarine Cruise, owner of Dance Unlimited in Colorado Springs.
Among the studio’s accolades is its Pikes Peak Performance Company (PPPC), in which young dancers have influence, especially by bringing joy to local children. In over 13 years, they have raised funds to support: the Kennedy Center Imagination Celebration, Falcon Works, FutureSelf, Kid Power, Compassion for Kids, KPCC, Kids Place, PAYGO, CASA, Manitou Art Theater, Andrea Rizzo Foundation, Colorado Springs Down Syndrome Association, Alpine Austin Autism Center of Colorado Springs, and Concrete Couch.

In this beautiful mission, PPCC collaborates with the Colorado Springs Youth Symphony. Dancers and musicians share their gifts with audiences, both young and young-at-heart ~ all enjoying stellar shows for great causes!
We Can Go Home:

Broadway Artist Returns to "Thank a Dance Teacher!"

Adapted from an article in Miami's Community News:

Alumnus returns to campus for Broadway Audition Workshop | Miami's Community News (communitynewspapers.com)

Alumnus Natalie Caruncho returns to her high school campus to host professional auditions and other workshops with the Gulliver Prep Dance Program. Among her accolades: an associate choreographer and cast member in the hit Broadway musical "On Your Feet!" Her mother, Ms. Gerri Barreras, is the school's dance teacher and NHSDA advisor.

Natalie commented:

"Gulliver is where my dreams started to become a reality. I grew up in the music and dance rooms, and it is an exceptional place for me. I remember people who taught me the wisdom they imparted, so I'm glad to come back and be a part of that."

Bravo!
The Power of Ballet

Mission: Ballet 180 School inspires a 180-degree positive transformation of the mind, body, and soul through dance classes, performances, and community events.

Ballet 180 School began in a small storefront with one practice space and now houses three studios and serves hundreds of students in Devon, PA. This close-knit family of teachers, dancers, staff, and parents builds positive community awareness through the arts. Students receive quality instruction in a safe environment with performance opportunities.

Dancers ages 8-18 seeking to expand their training participate in the Student Company. Working as a team, they gain the tools to excel in life. Many exceptional young people serve as teacher’s assistants and volunteer in Community Engagement programs.

The school’s 1940s jazzy “Nutcracker” and Spring Showcase bring joy to all!
Feature

Raw and Emotional ~ Signs of Love
By: Alisha Edwards
Honorable Mention, 2022 NHSDA
Edison High School
Advisor/Sponsor: Vicki Jenkins

I remember a film with a short story about a girl whose parents were deaf, but she could hear. She was lost, as if she did not belong in the world, but eventually found a balance that saved her.

She performed a contemporary piece in which, halfway through, she stopped and signed the accompanying lyrics to her parents. That episode in her dance felt so raw and emotional.

When I first thought of my solo, her message came to mind, which inspired me in ways to express myself through movement. The concept of communication transformed as I explored that idea. How could I make an audience truly comprehend my feelings without saying one word? How could I make an audience understand American sign language without explaining verbally what each gesture meant? Every move in this solo was to show my emotions to the fullest.
Feature
“Honed Motion”
By: Luciano Olivieri
Honorable Mention, 2022 NHSDA Award
Osceola County School for the Arts
Advisor/Sponsor: Marina Perendy

I have always wanted to do a solo illustrating my skills. The title of my piece is "Honed Motion," and here is why. Honing an object aims to sharpen or improve what we see on the surface and enhance movement quality. In the creative process, this dance would parallel how far I have reached since my childhood love of dance.

I was once that shy child who hid within the crowd. Yet, when I got home, the music in my neighborhood moved me in a manner that brought excitement, and my mom noticed this. When I was nine years old, I attended my first dance class at a studio nearby. She watched the whole time since there was a window for parents to observe, but she saw my shame in dancing in front of others. Instead of discontinuing my participation, she convinced me to continue to see where the experience would take me. To my surprise, I became more outgoing and established the goal of pursuing this art form professionally. Joining a dance club in my elementary school in third grade, I found more joy in dancing. Often bullied since "dancing is for girls only," I finally let go of my shame, not just dancing in my room but in front of others.

Looking back, third through fifth grade tested my passion for dance. Thanks to my drive and power, I overcame hardships by turning them into motivations to keep improving. Reassuring to dance for myself and nobody else. I am grateful all my growth has led to where I am now. I will bring attention to this art form for all to embrace. Dance anywhere, move any time – why not?! I will prove limited financial status or where we originated does not matter – only our passion. I would love people to witness my love for dance and how far it has helped me achieve my life’s goals.

I have implemented bold new steps in my choreography, which were impossible until now. This achievement resulted from my drive and motivation to produce original choreography. I have sharp movements leading throughout my piece from one to the following location. Highlighted moments of suspension and exhales contrasted this sharpness while portraying two kinds of action amplified that quality has no specific speed or power.

My whole life, I have been learning techniques, but not until recently have I honed my pure movement. In my solo, I challenged myself with uncomfortable steps that ultimately refined the piece. Improvisation functioned as a catalyst for a song that echoed the music of my childhood – which drove me naturally to dance.
I reiterate, my solo’s creation has helped me explore what power my body is capable of and acts as a constant reminder of my life’s positive growth.
As cultural enrichment, our ballet specialist Katie Ryan invited Lin Wang to present a master class at San Diego Danceworks. Ms. Wang, an artist at the Xingjian Dance Studio, introduced us to Chinese classical and folk dance, and by contributing to our “Tea” choreography, she shined brightly with our “Nutcracker” spirit! This exquisite, challenging art often combines lyrical movement with acrobatics and props – and our young dancers loved learning her repertoire! We believe dance develops the whole person. Our teachers are compassionate and knowledgeable, respecting all body types, ethnicities, and holistic needs. We encourage creativity and expression of feelings, giving students confidence in their ability to bring their ideas into positive actions.

~ Ms. Barbara Rinaldo

Acrobatics, one spectacular Chinese dance element
Here, our NHSDA member Lilliana Brockman reflects upon engaging in the authentic Chinese style, embracing beauty with cultural understanding:

“Working with Lin on Chinese dancing was so eye-opening and really fun, too. She was so nice and guided anyone who needed help during her master class. I got to learn about the distinct kinds of dance and using fans in each style. It was so cool experiencing this new dance for a production of our “Nutcracker” and go home to show my friends and family about how I used the fan. I am so glad we got to have Lin share her way of dancing and choreographing “Chinese Tea” ~ I was so excited and proud to perform this choreography on stage. The dance was definitely one of my favorites in this year's performance.”
My dream is to travel the world spreading this dance message: Anxiety is vast in our society, but I genuinely believe dance helps the most troubled — whatever skill or age, anyone can and should dance.

When I started my solo, I dealt with a stressful time. For various reasons, I felt lonely and unwanted. While those thoughts may seem fleeting insecurities, I grasped dance as my support system for inspiration to let my emotions go. And I stayed at the studio all day, turning on a playlist to move creatively and freely — with no judgment, no expectations. After listening to hours of music, combining new steps, a specific song struck me, which threaded my movement to a lyrical analysis. The song had a passionate sense of rage in the delivery, fitting deeply into how I felt. From that moment, I knew I would choreograph this song. Once in the process, the choreography came naturally.

Although I had mental blocks, I knew I could return to my authentic movement for inspiration. Ultimately, I found the title of the piece, "Pride in Solitary," after discovering I do not need to depend on others to create something beautiful or a fulfilling life. The piece took a while to complete, but the process and outcome helped me find what I wanted to gain — the idea of freedom.

Since I was three, dance has been prominent. I tried other activities, like soccer and gymnastics, but nothing sparked as much as dance. I joined my studio's competition team when I was seven and continue seeking inspiration through creative movement. I am beyond grateful this is my path — I have learned much about myself.

In my training, I have gained discipline, respect, and vulnerability. Growing up, I was a fearless kid, not afraid of what people thought of me, and always willing to try new things. However, I slowly lost the will to be myself because I worried about what people thought of me. Thankfully, this issue did not apply in the studio, and I could be myself and not worry about outside negativity.

The supportive environment connected to dance is unique, and I hold tightly to the "real world" — because nobody should feel judged just for existing. Gaining these qualities as a dancer has set me up for situations not involving dance. Inspiring role models at my studio gifted me with all these crucial attributes. Looking back at my training, I absorbed these positive attributes from the hours of classes and rehearsals, which is the main point I will take from my studio training. Without realizing it, I evolved into a caring dancer, naturally sharing my experience and joy in multiple communities.
“Onward, I will show the vitality of freeing creative movement; while technique and performance are significant, the art form offers even greater rewards. Everyone should feel vulnerable and expressive, choreographing and living within positive lessons.”
**Dance Arts Now!**

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**Be Published!**

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*PC Melina's Dance Company*